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Protracted conflicts in the GUAM area and their implications for international peace, security and development

Security Council
Sixty-fifth year

Identical letters dated 15 October 2010 from the Permanent Representative of Georgia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to transmit herewith the statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia on the thirteenth round of the Geneva Discussions, held on 14 October 2010 (see annex).

I should be grateful if the present letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the General Assembly under agenda item 34, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Alexander **Lomaia**
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Annex to the identical letters dated 15 October 2010 from the Permanent Representative of Georgia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

Statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia on the thirteenth round of the Geneva Discussions

The thirteenth round of the Geneva talks was held on 14 October 2010. Participants discussed the issues of security and stability in Georgia's occupied Abkhazia and Tskhinvali regions and the safe and dignified return of internally displaced persons and refugees to their places of habitual residence. Meetings of the two working groups were held, in which participants took part in an individual capacity. Deliberations were moderated by representatives of the United Nations, the European Union and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and attended by participants from Georgia, the Russian Federation and the United States of America. The head of the provisional administration of the former South Ossetian Autonomous District, Dimitri Sanakoev, and the Chair of the Government of the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia, Giorgi Baramia, took part in the thirteenth round of the Geneva talks. Representatives of the proxy regimes from Tskhinvali and Sokhumi also participated in the working groups.

To the disappointment of the Georgian side, the thirteenth round of the Geneva talks was once again marred by the walk-out of the participants from the Tskhinvali proxy regime from the working group dealing with the issues of safe and dignified return of internally displaced persons and refugees. It is obvious that the decision of the Tskhinvali proxy regime to boycott the Geneva Discussions can only be explained by the refusal of Moscow to allow the safe and dignified return of internally displaced persons and refugees to the places from where they were forcefully evicted. The Co-chairs regretted the decision of the Tskhinvali proxy regime and stated in their press communiqué that the resumption of the usual format of Working Group II was essential for confidence-building and resolution of immediate humanitarian problems.

Two information sessions were held before the meetings of the working groups on 13 October 2010. In one session, participants received information from international experts on the voluntary exchange of information and facilitation of communication across the occupation line. In another session, technical aspects of property restitution and return were discussed. During that session, international experts shared experiences gained in other regions with participants. It was agreed that, during the following rounds, co-moderators would continue to explore the ways in which field experience and lessons learned in other conflict areas could be used to further the creation of conditions for the safe and dignified return of internally displaced persons and refugees to their homes.

In Working Group I, which addressed the issues of security and stability, participants from Tbilisi stressed the importance of full implementation of the 12 August ceasefire agreement, and the full de-occupation and withdrawal of Russian troops from the occupied Georgian territories. Particular attention was paid to the ongoing work of the so-called "demarcation" of the occupation line and the imposition of artificial restrictions on the freedom of movement of the local population.

During the session, the Georgian side once again called upon Moscow and its proxy regimes to immediately release all detainees and to ensure the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the occupied regions of Georgia. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia believes that the lives of the detainees, some of whom require urgent medical assistance, continue to be in danger as a result of the inhuman and degrading treatment to which they are regularly subjected. The Georgian side calls upon the international community to undertake concerted action and to persuade the Russian Federation and its proxy regimes to abandon the practice of taking hostages and release these persons immediately. Meanwhile, it is essential that international humanitarian agencies be given full access to these detainees and to others in need of humanitarian assistance inside the occupied regions of Georgia.

During the meeting of Working Group I, the Georgian side once again emphasized the importance of the full functioning of the Incident Prevention and Response Mechanisms. During that round, participants reached an agreement to resume the work of the Ergneti/Dvani Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism by the end of October. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia hopes that the agreements reached within the Geneva framework will be honoured and that the work of the mechanism, which had been suspended for the past year because of the position of Moscow and Tskhinvali, will finally be restored.

Another issue discussed during the thirteenth round was a decision by Moscow to withdraw its armed forces from the occupied village of Perevi. While this development will have positive implications for the local residents of Perevi, it should be noted that it is an initial step, which must be followed by the full de-occupation of the Georgian regions of Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia, where more than 10,000 Russian troops continue to be stationed in contravention of international law, the accepted international principle of host nation consent and the ceasefire agreement of 12 August 2008.

In Working Group I, participants continued discussing issues related to the non-use of force and international security arrangements. Unfortunately, participants from Moscow continue to reject the approach proposed by the Co-chairs, once again demonstrating that they are unwilling to engage in discussions on the establishment of an effective security regime in the occupied territories, consisting of international security arrangements and the agreement on the non-use of force.

In Working Group II, participants began their work with a review of the humanitarian situation on the ground and pointed out the need for concrete humanitarian actions in view of the upcoming winter season. Once again, owing to the lack of willingness by Moscow and its proxy regimes to allow the safe and dignified return of internally displaced persons to their homes, Working Group II made no substantial progress. Participants will revisit the issue of establishing conditions for the safe and dignified return of internally displaced persons through joint undertakings during the following round. The Georgian side hopes that, at least during the next round, Working Group II will be able to assemble in full composition.

Participants agreed to hold the fourteenth round of Geneva talks on 16 December 2010.

Tbilisi, 14 October 2010